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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused March 14-16 news coverage on Taiwan's first-ever Quadrennial Defense Review, which was published by the National Defense Ministry Monday; on the KMT's defeat in the legislative by-election in Miaoli County Saturday; and on cross-Straits relations. The pro-unification "United Daily News" front-paged a banner headline on Saturday reading "Taiwan is Expected to Join the World Health Assembly [as an Observer] on a 'Year by Year' Basis." In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" discussed the foreign policy of the Obama Administration and said it is unlikely that the hawks will try to stop U.S. President Barack Obama from pushing for his "relatively moderate" foreign policy, as Obama will not allow ideology to sabotage the real national interests of the United States. End summary.

"U.S. Hawks Warning [U.S. President Barack] Obama"

The "International Lookout" column in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 150,000] wrote (3/15):

"[The United States'] diplomatic operations undertaken since the Obama Administration took office have apparently been more moderate than those during the Bush Administration. [Secretary of State Hillary] Clinton's foreign policy of 'smart power' is a mixture of hard and soft [power] and its scope seems to touch politics, economics and even military security. If this is also a direction that [U.S. President Barack] Obama wants to take, then it will inevitably trigger opposition from those hawks. One must know that, even though the head of the Republican neo-conservatives is no longer in office, those who hold such a tough position in Congress and the military still remain in power. For a certain period of time the power of the Pentagon surpassed that of the State Department, and it goes without saying that it is not happy now to see the State Department take the lead in all foreign affairs. ...

"Given the poor economic situation in the United States, Obama is surely aware of the importance of China and the Korean Peninsula. Will the intimidation of the so-called hawks be able to deter him from pushing his moderate foreign policy? Normally the answer will be unlikely, because the President has enormous administrative authority, and for any policy he decides to promote, particularly foreign policy, there will be hardly anyone who has the power to obstruct it. Obama will not allow any ideology to sabotage the [U.S.'s] actual national interests, and this principle applies to [the U.S.'s] China policy, North Korean policy, Middle East policy and Russian policy."

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